DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 412 350 CE 074 855

TITLE	Career Immersion. School-to-Work Outreach Project 1997 Exemplary Model/Practice/Strategy.
INSTITUTION	Minnesota Univ., Minneapolis. Inst. on Community Integration.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	5p.; For related documents, see CE 074 856-858.
CONTRACT	H029B30142
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Education; *Career Exploration; *Cooperative Programs; Demonstration Programs; *Education Work Relationship; Educational Practices; Elementary Education; Employment Potential; Integrated Curriculum; Job Skills; Learning Activities; *School Business Relationship; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	Milwaukee Public Schools WI

ABSTRACT

The Career Immersion program, which has been conducted since 1989-90 at Silver Spring Elementary School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, introduces the world of work to students at an early age. The program's primary activities involve hands-on, school-based learning in which all students participate. Students between the ages of 3 and 13 participate in 2 program components--classroom business and in-school employment--and are guided by business and community partners. Each classroom is an independently operated business, such as a school supply business or a candy business. Through their experience of working in the businesses, students develop a greater awareness of the connection between education and work while learning beyond the regular curriculum. In-school employment provides great learning opportunities by encouraging responsibility and development of a high-quality work ethic while performing unpaid, in-school jobs such as art helper, cadet, and peer mediator. Business and community partners serve as liaisons in each of the classrooms, sharing their business expertise and assisting teachers as mentors, teachers, and business advisors. The program is successful for the following reasons: all students participate; it was initiated by staff; it is affordable; it has a unique approach to addressing school-to-work issues for elementary students; and it uses multiple teaching and learning strategies with career discovery as its theme. (KC)

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ED 412 350

Career Immersion
Silver Spring Elementary School
5131 North Green Bay Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53209
(414) 228-8630

Mission/Goals

To maximize every student's academic achievement by providing opportunities beyond the classroom that help to make successful connections between school and careers. The goals of the Career Immersion program are to (*a*) develop responsible and productive citizens for the 21st century, (*b*) assist students to realize that what they are learning in school today will affect their future tomorrow, (*c*) support the community in assuming some responsibility for the education of it's future work force and leaders, and (*d*) provide students with unique and enjoyable school experiences such as field trips, guest speakers, and active learning experiences.

Organization/Program Context

The Career Immersion program began in 1989-90 when the staff at Silver Spring School identified the lack of career awareness training and activities in the existing school curriculum. The program has expanded to include collaboration with two area high schools where students participate in an on- the-job training program. It offers students a myriad of role models and a great sense of work and work-related activities. This program is being cited as a model for the entire Milwaukee Public School system to follow.

Description

The Career Immersion program introduces the world of work to students at an early age, helping to create a clear link between school and work. The program's primary activities involve hands-on, school-based learning. All of the students enrolled at Silver Spring Elementary School participate in the Career Immersion program. Students participate in two program components, *classroom business* and *in-school employment*, and are guided by *business and community partners*.

Classroom businesses serve as the entrepreneurial focal point to improve student learning, promote self-esteem, increase vocabulary, and offer business like opportunities. Each classroom is an independently operated business. Examples include a school supply business, a popcorn and candy business, and a recycling firm. One business sponsors school dances in which students learn about management skills, marketing, advertising, salesmanship, profits and losses, and making decisions about how the profits are used. Through this experience, students develop a greater awareness about the connection between education and work, while learning beyond the regular curriculum.

In-school employment provides great learning opportunities by encouraging responsibility and the development of a quality work ethic. Every student is encouraged to apply for non-paid, in-school jobs, such as, Art Helper, Cadet,

Contact Person

Mrs. Elcendia Nord
School Principal
(414) 228-8630

Community Setting

Major city in Wisconsin with a population of over 660,000. There are many colleges and universities in Milwaukee, including the University of Wisconsin (Milwaukee) and Marquette University.

Population Served

Silver Spring Elementary School serves 380 students between the ages of 3 and 13. Of all the students, 75% are persons without disabilities, 15% are students identified with specific learning disabilities, and 10% have a speech and/or language impairment.

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Program Staff

Principal
1 full-time
- Oversees the project
- Acts as a liaison to buinesses and community partners
- Evaluates the success of the program

Classroom Teacher
22 full-time
7 part-time
- Instructs, monitors, and works with the business community and school teams
- Serves as CEO for the classroom business

Implementor
1 full-time
- Coordinates day-to-day activities of the project
- Serves as a resource to the CEOs
- Acts as a liaison between CEOs (teachers) and business and community partners
- Identifies and coordinates different business and community resources like speakers, tutors, and mentors

Parent Coordinator
1 full-time
- Provides education to parents
- Provides training to business and community partners

Business/Community Partner
10 part-time
- Serves as mentor, resource, tutor, and site provider for field trips
- Provides business strategies and management skills to the CEOs

Peer Mediator, and Reporter. Interested applicants fill out an application form and interview for the position. The experience is made as realistic as possible, with the exception that every student applicant is placed. In order to keep the position, the student is expected to meet on-the-job performance standards. Plans are being developed to "pay" students with Silver Spring Money, the value of which will be determined by its in-school purchasing power.

Business and community partners of Silver Spring Elementary School share similar goals and want to participate in school-to-work activities. These partners serve as liaisons in each of the classrooms sharing their business expertise and assisting teachers as mentors, teachers, and business advisors. The partners volunteer in the school's tutoring program, participate in Career Week and other career speaker days, provide resources for field trips and in-services, and serve as the sites for field trips. The partnerships are maintained through regular monthly meetings, whereby both school and business problems and solutions are discussed.

Exemplary School-to-Work Components

Classroom Business - School-based Learning
Each grade functions as an independently operated business. Students are responsible for operating these businesses with their teachers acting as the Chief Executive Officer.

In-School Employment - School-based Learning
Every student has an opportunity to apply for a nonpaying employment experience. Students complete an application, participate in an interview process, and are offered a contract if they are accepted for the position. The contract is signed by the employer.

What Makes it Work?

- All students enrolled in the elementary school participate in Career Immersion.
- The program is endorsed by the School Based Management Council, and supported by the local administrator as meeting the school district's goals.
- It was initiated by staff to teach students about career awareness.
- The program is useful at any grade level and financially affordable.
- The high expectations of staff and students produces high quality results.
- The program provides a risk-taking environment for students and enables staff to use their creative skills.
- Attention is afforded to life issues and skill requirements to be successful in a technology based society.
- The program has a unique approach to addressing school-to-work issues for elementary students.
- The program uses multiple teaching and learning strategies with career discovery as its theme.

John's Story

John came to Silver Spring Elementary School in October of 1993. He has a severe speech impediment and learning disability, which at times resulted in behavior issues.

John was in the classroom that operated the *Silver Spring Sodas* business and quickly became involved. By 1995, his second year in the business, John had become an officer of *Silver Spring Sodas*. This meant that he had the responsibility of ordering the sodas, stocking the machines, and counting the money. Because of his success in the classroom business, John was given an opportunity to introduce the business to the entire student body at the school.

During John's third year at Silver Spring, he began assisting the early childhood teacher, in addition to his duties as an officer in the soda business. His duties included supervising children while they were eating lunch, helping children for bus dismissal, and walking them to their respective buses. He loved the job and was very successful at it. He accepted the responsibility of the job and kept the conditions of his contract.

In June of 1996, John was honored as the student who had made the most improvement in the graduating class at Silver Spring Elementary School.

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Because of his success in the classroom business, John was given an opportunity to introduce the business to the entire student body at the school.

For Further Information

School-to-Work Outreach Project
Institute on Community Integration (UAP)
University of Minnesota
110B Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
(612)626-8155; fax (612)624-9344
http://www.ici.coled.umn.edu/schooltowork/

School-to-work is described in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994.

School to work is . . .

A System built to provide opportunities for students to learn about and experience work while in school.

Educational Reform that addresses the need for students to gain work experience and workplace skills while in school.

Partnerships between schools, employers and communities.

For All Students, kindergarten through 12th grade.

School-to-Work Outreach Project Overview

The School-to-Work Outreach Project at the Institute on Community Integration (UAP) is a nationwide, three year project funded by the U.S. Department of Education. This project assists and supports school-to-work initiatives through the identification of exemplary school-to-work models/practices/strategies that include students with disabilities. Exemplary school-to-work models/practices/strategies are identified through a five step selection process:

- **Nomination**
- **Application**
- **Reference**
- **Application Review**
- **Final Review and Selection**

Identification Criteria and school-to-work Priority Areas established by the School-to-Work Outreach Project guide the application review.

Profiles of the identified models/practices/strategies are available upon request. Adoption and replication of these exemplary school-to-work activities is encouraged and technical assistance is available to schools and organizations interested in implementing these models/practices/strategies or improving existing school-to-work activities and systems. Contact the School-to-Work Outreach Project at the above address for further information.

Basic Elements of School-to-Work

School-based Learning - Instruction and experiences based on academic and occupational standards.

Work-based Learning - Workplace experience, structured training, mentoring and apprenticeships at job sites.

Connecting Activities - A variety of activities that build and maintain bridges between school, work and other adult environments.

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The development and dissemination of this profile was supported in part by grant #H029B30142 from the U.S. Department of Education. Upon request, this document can be made available in alternative formats and languages.

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